

## KARL JENKINS (B. 1944)

Karl Jenkins was born and grew up in the South Wales village Gower of Penclawdd. His father, as schoolteacher, organist and choirmaster, gave his son music lessons. Jenkins received classical music training at Wales' Cardiff University and at the London Royal Academy of Music. He went on to gain broad experience as composer, arranger, jazz performer, and band leader, acquiring knowledge of music spanning many centuries and traditions.

Jenkins first made his mark in jazz. On keyboard and oboe, he was a founding member of Nucleus, a pioneering prize-winning jazz-rock band. He later joined the psychedelic progressive rock and jazz fusion band Soft Machine, which was influential in the 1970s.

In the 1980s, Jenkins turned to a composing career in the field of advertising music, winning awards for music he created for many well-known companies. In the mid-1990s, he entered mainstream music with the *Adiemus* project, which began as an experimentation with various vocal and instrumental sounds. The first three albums of the *Adiemus* series won phenomenal global recognition, topping both classical and popular music charts and winning 15 gold and platinum awards.

Classic FM, the U.K.'s foremost classical radio station with six million listeners, conducts annual listener surveys to determine the most popular classical composers. Shortly after the 2000 premiere of *The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace*, the work claimed the eighth slot in the top-10 list, placing Jenkins as the only living composer among such greats as Mozart and Rachmaninov. The *Armed Man* CD was released on September 10, 2001, the day before world-changing events that led to another war.

Jenkins continues to explore fresh sounds, blending genres, cultures, and historical periods, creating music that draws an ever-broader audience. Soon after its 2005 release, his *Requiem* topped the classical charts. That same year, *The Armed Man* CD went gold, selling more than 100,000 copies, and has had hundreds of performances in the U.K. and Europe.

## The Armed Man – A Mass For Peace

*The Armed Man* was commissioned for the millennium by the U.K. Royal Armouries and had its premiere in London. Speaking about the commission, Guy Wilson, Master of the Armouries, observes, "What better way, within the framework of Christian musical and liturgical form, both to look back and reflect as we leave behind the most war-torn and destructive century in human history, and to look ahead with hope and commit ourselves to a new and more peaceful millennium." Jenkins describes his inspiration this way: "As I started composing *The Armed Man*, the tragedy of Kosovo unfolded. I was reminded daily of the horror of such conflict, and so I dedicate the work to the victims of Kosovo."

According to Wilson, Jenkins "responded to the commission by composing the most marvelous, varied, accessible, appropriate and singable music that embraces the whole world and the full range of emotions that the subjects of war and peace evoke." The hope was that performances across time would encourage young people to think about "the vital issues of war and peace."

The human longing for peace is a visceral presence in this mass, as each movement adds to the larger story of war's devastating impact. The various texts

selected by Wilson and Jenkins, as well as the music itself, embrace time periods from the first millennium B.C. to modern times. The work bridges Hindu, Islamic, Judaic and Christian traditions.

For more than 500 years, composers have created settings for the Burgundian song "L'Homme Armé." Jenkins opens the mass with this song, introducing the marching drumbeat of war, first barely audible, as though it might pass in the distance. The chorus joins with "*L'homme armé doit on douter*" (the armed man must be feared), sung as a relentless round; we become aware that this is a call to arms, generating a march to war.

The Koran, the holy book of Islam, stresses prayer as the link between Muslims and Allah, creator and benefactor. The call to prayer, "*Adhaan*," came into being so Muslims would know when to pray and when to go to the mosque for congregational prayer. Traditionally, one of the men takes the role of *muezzin* and sings the call from the mosque rooftop or minaret five times each day. Although the pronunciation and accompanying actions for the call to prayer differ from one country or region to another, the words remain the same.

The Islamic call to prayer is followed by a prayer from the Christian Ordinary of the mass. "Kyrie" begins in a stately, somber mood while the central "Christe eleison," is presented in the style of Renaissance composer Palestrina. The tenor line imitates Palestrina's use of "L'Homme Armé" as a *cantus firmus* in his mass by the same name.

"Save Me from Bloody Men" sets Biblical text to Gregorian chant. After prayers of "Be merciful unto me," "Defend me," and "Deliver me," the voices become impassioned with fear and anger, crying out "Save me," as an ominous sense of doom overtakes them.

The infectiously involving, yet subtly menacing "Sanctus" follows, with its militaristic rhythm that harks back to that of "L'Homme Armé."

Rudyard Kipling's "Hymn Before Action" depicts the mindset of men preparing themselves for the pitched battle to come. Jenkins uses a sturdy chorale to reflect the grim determination of a brotherhood prepared to die together.

"Charge!" expresses the seductive power of waging war. The text is drawn from John Dryden's "Song for Saint Cecelia's Day," in which he describes music's power to inspire a wide range of human emotions, including the belligerent. Twice in this movement, the women's voices soar above the thundering hooves, with lines by Jonathan Swift, taken from a letter to the Earl of Oxford urging peaceful actions in the face of hostilities. These voices are subsumed in the enthusiastic movement forward which culminates in the final "charge."

Predictably, the unified movement collapses and fragments into a cacophony of horrified voices as the reality of battle hits. A long silence is followed by a lone trumpeter sounding the “last post” from afar.

The two central movements of *The Armed Man* describe the immediate effects of war. A solitary bell and trumpet open “Angry Flames,” then a slow melody emerges. Brief, poignant choral phrases emphasize the surreal vision in the words of poet Toge Sankichi, just 24 years old when the bomb fell on Hiroshima. He became the leading Hiroshima poet in Japan and a passionate activist for peace during his remaining years, before succumbing to radiation-caused leukemia.

“Torches” reminds us that mass destruction is as old as war itself, as the text is from the ancient Hindu epic “Mahabharata.” This collection of stories dates from the first millennium B.C., and became a unified text of 100,000 stanzas around 350 A.D. The awesome visions of the cosmos, divinity, and humanity compare in philosophical depth, complexity and scope to the Greek myths and the Bible. Following four painfully dissonant and forceful chords, the strings provide a gently rocking accompaniment while the stunned chorus reports the fiery scene that has destroyed beloved animals and humans alike, reminding us that while the means of destruction may have “evolved,” their effects remain chillingly the same.

The beautiful melody of the prayer “Agnus Dei” (Lamb of God) is first stated by the sopranos but then embraced by the chorus, serves as a prayer for all those whose lives have been sacrificed.

Moving from the destruction of many lives to the importance of a single life, the speaker of “Now the Guns Have Stopped” must confront the fact of his own survival, in the face of the death of a dearest friend. The depth of loss and grief expressed in Guy Wilson’s elegy is layered on a static backdrop of vibratoless strings.

“Benedictus” responds to the profound emptiness expressed in the prior movement with an exquisitely simple melody, presented by a solo cello, which seems to contain whatever solace can be found in the face of such loss. The melody is taken up by the chorus, which moves to a resounding and affirming “Hosanna” before returning to its simple beginning.

The final movement returns to the 15th century with the transformation of the opening theme. The menacing, martial quality first heard is refigured into a rollicking dance in a major key. Lancelot and Guinevere’s observation, gained through bitter experience, that “Better is peace than always war,” is taken from Thomas Malory’s “Le Morte d’Arthur”. This upbeat reprisal reasserts the optimism and resilience needed to triumph over disasters, even those of our own

making. The central text is culled from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam A.H.H." and invites us to look back on the past millennium ("thousand years of wars") and choose a different path for the new millennium ("thousand years of peace"). The orchestra and chorus come together joyously to ring in the new epoch.

The piece closes with a beautiful, simple a cappella choral setting, drawing on Revelations 21:4, depicting a time in which there is no more sorrow or pain, and giving thanks for such a vision.

*Notes by Carol Talbeck and Barbara Jones*

## TEXT

(translations, as necessary, in italics)

### 1. L'Homme Armé (Anon. Trad.)

L'homme, l'homme, l'homme armé,  
 L'homme armé  
 L'homme armé doit on douter, doit on  
 douter.  
 On a fait partout crier,  
 Que chacun se viegne armer  
 D'un haubregon de fer

### The Armed Man

*The Armed Man*  
*The Armed Man must be feared:*  
*Everywhere it has been Decreed*  
*That every man should arm himself*  
*With an iron coat of mail.*

### 2. Adhaan

Allahu Akbar  
 Ashadu An La Illa-L-Lah  
 Ashadu Anna Muhammadan Rasulu-l-lah  
 Hayya Ala-s-salah  
 Hayya Ala-l-Falah  
 Allahu Akbar  
 La Illaha il la-lah

### Call to Prayer

*Allah is most great.*  
*I testify that there is no God except Allah.*  
*I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.*  
*Come to prayer!*  
*Come to success!*  
*Allah is most great.*  
*There is none worthy of worship except Allah.*

### 3. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.  
 Christe eleison.  
 Kyrie eleison.

*Lord have mercy.*  
*Christ have mercy.*  
*Lord have mercy.*

### 4. Save Me from Bloody Men

Be merciful unto me, O God:  
 For man would swallow me up.  
 He fighting daily oppresseth me.  
 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up:  
 For they be many that fight against me.

O Thou most high.  
 Defend me from them that rise up against  
 me.  
 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,  
 And save me from bloody men.

## 5. Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus

Dominus Deus Sabaoth

Pleni sunt caeli et terra Gloria tua

Hosanna in excelsis

*Holy, holy, holy,*

*Lord God of Hosts.*

*Heaven and earth are filled with Your glory.*

*Hosannah in the highest.*

## 6. Hymn Before Action (RUDYARD KIPLING 1865-1936)

The earth is full of anger,

The seas are dark with wrath,

The Nations in their harness

Go up against our path:

High lust and froward bearing,

Proud heart, rebellious brow,

Deaf ear and soul uncaring,

We seek Thy mercy now!

Ere yet we loose the legions

Ere yet we draw the blade,

Jehova of the Thunders,

Lord God of Battles, aid!

The sinner that forswore Thee,

The fool that passed Thee by,

Our times are known before Thee,

Lord grant us strength to die!

## 7. Charge! (JOHN DRYDEN 1635-1700/JONATHAN SWIFT 1667-1745)

The trumpets loud Clangor

Excites us to Arms

With shrill notes of anger

And mortal alarms.

How blest is he who for his country dies.

The double, double beat

Of the thundering drum

Cries Hark! The foes come.

Charge, charge, 'tis too late, too late to  
retreat.

How blest is he who for his country dies.

## 8. Angry Flames (TOGE SANKICHI 1917-1953)

Pushing up through smoke

From a world half-darkened by over-  
hanging cloud,

The shroud that mushroomed out

And struck the dome of the sky,

Black,

red, blue

Dance in the air,

Merge,

Scatter glittering sparks already tower over  
the whole city.

Quivering like seaweed

The mass of flames spurts forward.

Popping up in the dense smoke,

Crawling out

Wreathed in fire,

Countless human beings on all fours

In a heap of embers that erupt and sub-  
side,

Hair rent,

Rigid in death,

There smoulders a curse.

**9. Torches** (THE MAHABHARATH, 6TH C. BC)

The animals scattered in all directions,  
screaming terrible screams.

Many were burning,  
others were burnt.

All were shattered and scattered mind-  
lessly,

their eyes bulging.

Some hugged their sons, others their  
fathers and mothers, unable to let  
them go,

and so they died.

Others leapt up in their thousands, faces  
disfigured,

and were consumed by the fire.

Everywhere were bodies squirming on the  
ground:

wings, eyes and paws all burning;

they breathed their last as living torches.

**10. Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi  
miserere nobis.

*Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.*

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi  
dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sins of the world,  
grant us peace.*

**11. Now the Guns have Stopped** (GUY WILSON b.1950)

Silent, so silent, now  
Now the guns have stopped.  
I have survived all,  
I who knew I would not.  
But now you are not here.  
I shall go home alone;  
And must try to live life as before

And hide my grief.  
For you,  
my dearest friend,  
who should be with me now,  
Not cold, too soon,  
And in your grave,  
Alone.

**12. Benedictus**

Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini.  
Hosannah in excelsis

*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*



**13: Better Is Peace** (BY VARIOUS, INCLUDING THOMAS MALORY (1405-1471);  
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809-1892); AND REV. 21:4)

Better is peace than always war.  
And better is peace than evermore war.  
Ring out the thousand wars of old.  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.  
Ring out the old, ring in the new.  
Ring happy bells, across the snow.  
The year is going, let him go.  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.  
Ring out old shapes of foul disease.  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand.  
Ring out the darkness of the land.  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

God shall wipe away all tears  
And there shall be no more death,  
Neither sorrow nor crying,  
Neither shall there be any more pain.  
Praise the Lord!